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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Consumer Advisory: Terry Goddard Offers Tips to Avoid Home Repair Scams

(Phoenix, Ariz. – July 11, 2008) Monsoon storms can provide a welcome break from summer's blazing heat. Their trademark high winds and heavy rain, however, can also damage homes and properties. Attorney General Terry Goddard urges residents to be careful when approached by workers going door-to-door, offering unsolicited help with storm cleanup and repairs.

"Many door-to-door workers seem friendly and claim to offer one-time discounts and other special deals on storm repairs," Goddard said. "In reality, these con artists perform unsafe or incomplete work and, once they are finished, often demand far more in payment than the quoted price."

In one common repair scam, workers offer homeowners a "discounted" price on materials left over from previous roofing or paving jobs. The homeowner is given a verbal quote but no written estimate for the job. Once the job is complete, the homeowner is presented with a bill that is thousands of dollars more than the agreed upon price. In some cases, the scammer will claim to have performed additional work without the homeowner's consent. If challenged about the cost, the scammer tries to intimidate the homeowner by refusing to leave the property until paid in full.

Goddard offers the following red flags and tips for avoiding storm repair scams:

Red Flags

- Salespeople going door-to-door offering low-cost services or "free" inspections.
- Workers dropping by and saying, "We just happen to be working in your neighborhood and have time to fix your house," or "We have been working in your neighborhood and have leftover supplies we can provide at an especially low price."
- Workers who cannot provide a local address or telephone number.
- Workers who cannot provide their contractor's license number.

Tips to Protect Yourself

- Shop around! Ask for written estimates from at least three contractors.
- Request a list of references and check them before agreeing to hire anyone.
- Check with the Arizona Registrar of Contractors (www.azroc.gov) to make sure the contractor you are considering has a license.
- Make sure the scope of the project, the price and any other relevant terms are spelled out in a written contract. Do not let a stranger into your home. Talk outside or through a

- security screen door. If you want the salesperson to come back for a more extensive presentation, make sure a friend or family member is with you. It is not rude to refuse an unsolicited sales presentation.
- Never allow yourself to be hurried into making a decision. No reputable contractors will try to pressure you into hiring them.
 - Get the address and phone number of the company and the credentials of the sales representative before hiring anyone.
 - Do not be rushed into hiring a contractor because you are told the repair “is an emergency” or that your problem “is in violation of city code.” Neither may be true.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud, please contact the Attorney General’s Office in Phoenix at 602.542.5763; in Tucson at 520.628.6504; or outside the Phoenix and Tucson metro areas at 1.800.352.8431. To file a complaint in person, the Attorney General’s Office has 37 satellite offices throughout Arizona with volunteers available to help. Locations and hours are posted on the Attorney General’s Web site at www.azag.gov. Please visit the Web site to sign up for scam alerts and weekly messages from Attorney General Goddard.

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